



NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20 FEBRUARY 2020

BRIEFING NOTE: Tree Policy – Updated January 2020

Briefing note - Tree Policy – Updated January 2020

Northampton Borough Councils Tree Policy was first published in 2016 and is reviewed on a regular basis.

These reviews ensure that the policy is in line with the council's legal responsibilities under various acts and current legislation and also corresponds with the specification in the council's Environmental Services Contract with Veolia. The Veolia contract began in June 2018 for an initial term of ten years.

Arboriculture is an expensive service, therefore this policy gives residents and stakeholders a clear understanding of what the council is responsible for and an explanation of the service standards that residents can expect.

The policy was reviewed prior to the retendering of the Environmental Services Contract and a number of improvements were introduced to the specification, these include improved service level agreements and decreased response times to reported issues though it should be noted that this service element of the contract is input based and is not an output based specification.

Veolia are providing a good service from both a proactive and reactive point of view, they provide a detailed breakdown of all service requests, services provided in response to those service requests, an ongoing tree survey and the enhanced tree works service. The service is monitored against the 2016 policy and also the key performance indicators in the 2018 contract.

The enhanced tree work programme has been developed to service the Borough geographically by dividing the Borough into five geographic zones and a five year programme of works.

The enhanced tree programme has been allocated an additional £100,000 per annum over a five year period, Veolia are currently in year four of the five year programme and are coordinating all service requests, relevant tree survey results and any comments arising from consultation undertaken with the relevant stakeholders. This data then creates and prioritises the schedule of works, which is typically undertaken between September/October and February/March, outside of the bird nesting period. This extra money has allowed for additional works to be completed over and above the basic specification requirements.

It should also be noted that the core budget is for tree maintenance and not for the planting of additional trees. These would be managed as individual projects which would require sources of funding to be identified. The Climate Change Forum could look at identifying areas where additional trees could be planted and identifying suitable sources of funding.

A number of service requests are received from residents stating trees should be removed because they are dropping seeds or leaves or where they are blocking light. The existing tree policy enables us to ensure that healthy trees are not removed. It should be noted that some of these unfulfilled requests will remain contentious as the council will not remove healthy trees for reasons outside of the policy.

A schedule of works is available and is circulated to stakeholders such as Parish Councils and community groups for discussion in their regular meetings.

The Environment Services client team and Veolia have been working with stakeholders, residents groups and councillors on a variety of projects including locating and identifying past mayoral trees and also replacing street trees in some areas, for example, a recent project has seen ten highway trees replaced in Far Cotton. This request originally came from residents but was funded and implemented by a project group made up of Northampton Street Trees (a resident led group), Northampton County Council staff, Northampton Borough Councillors and the Woodland Trust. The trees were planted in December 2019 and early signs are that they are flourishing and the scheme considered so successful that another Northampton Borough Councillor is now looking to replicate the scheme.

The Environmental Services client team continue to monitor all elements of the Environmental Services Contract against the agreed service level agreements and the council has seen wholesale improvements in services provided over that of the previous service specification.

CC February 2020